

1. A method for restoring an interrupted switched connection between subscribers in a communications network having first and second transfer nodes and a network controller, the method comprising:

5        establishing, via the network controller, a protected channel between the first and second transfer nodes; and

         establishing a switched connection between the first and second transfer nodes in the protected channel;

         wherein, if the switched connection is interrupted as a  
10       result of an interruption in the protected channel, the method further comprises restoring the switched connection by restoring the protected channel.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the protected channel  
15       comprises a path that can accommodate a plurality of switched connections.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
         detecting an interruption in the switched connection; and  
20       restoring the protected channel following the interruption in the switched connection.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the protected channel comprises a soft permanent connection.

5 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the protected channel is established in accordance with at least one of standard Q.2767.1 (05/98) and standard AF-PNNI-0055.000 (03/96).

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
establishing an unprotected channel in parallel with the  
10 protected channel;

wherein the switched connection between the first and second transfer nodes can be established in one of the protected channel and the unprotected channel.

15 7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
deciding in which of the protected channel and the unprotected channel to establish the switched connection between the first and second transfer nodes.

20 8. The method of claim 7, wherein a sub-path exists between the first and second transfer nodes through which a signal is transmitted from the first transfer node to the

second transfer node, and wherein deciding is performed in the first transfer node.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the protected channel  
5 is autonomously and independently established by the communications network.

10. A system for restoring an interrupted switched connection between subscribers in a communications network,  
10 the system comprising:

a first transfer node for transmitting and receiving signals in the communications network;

a second transfer node for transmitting and receiving signals in the communications network; and

15 a network controller which establishes a protected channel between the first and second transfer nodes, establishes a switched connection between the first and second transfer nodes in the protected channel, and restores the switched connection by restoring the protected channel if the  
20 switched connection is interrupted as a result of an interruption in the protected channel.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the protected channel comprises a path that can accommodate a plurality of switched connections.

5 12. The system of claim 10, wherein the network controller:

detects an interruption in the switched connection; and  
restores the protected channel following the interruption in the switched connection.

10 13. The system of claim 10, wherein the protected channel comprises a soft permanent connection.

15 14. The system of claim 10, wherein the protected channel is established in accordance with at least one of standard Q.2767.1 (05/98) and standard AF-PNNI-0055.000 (03/96).

20 15. The system of claim 10, wherein:  
the network controller establishes an unprotected channel in parallel with the protected channel; and

the switched connection between the first and second transfer nodes can be established in one of the protected channel and the unprotected channel.

5           16. The system of claim 15, wherein first transfer node decides in which of the protected channel and the unprotected channel to establish the switched connection between the first and second transfer nodes.

10           17. The system of claim 16, wherein a sub-path exists between the first and second transfer nodes through which a signal is transmitted from the first transfer node to the second transfer node.

15           18. The system of claim 10, wherein the protected channel is autonomously and independently established by the communications network.